

CLARK SUGGESTS THAT HOOVER QUIT

Comments in Controversy
on Dr. King Wiretapping

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WASHINGTON, June 20—

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark suggested today that J. Edgar Hoover retire as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"I think, perhaps, the time has come when he should retire, both in the interests of his own career, which has been distinguished, and in the interests of the F.B.I., which has been a great investigative agency," Mr. Clark said in an interview with the Columbia Broadcasting System.

His suggestion was the latest in a continuing controversy involving the wiretapping of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Mr. Hoover said that Robert F. Kennedy initiated the wiretap when he was Attorney General. Mr. Clark and his immediate predecessor as Attorney General, Nicholas deB Katzenbach, labeled Mr. Hoover's statements misleading.

President's View

President Nixon seemed in his news conference last night to be siding with Mr. Hoover when he said he had checked and found that the Attorney General had approved the wiretap.

This, however, was not disputed. At issue was who initiated the wiretap and why.

The background of the current dispute is as follows:

In 1963, Dr. King's Atlanta-based Southern Christian Leadership Conference was at the forefront of the civil rights fight. Widely circulated reports that the conference was involved with persons of Communist background caused concern among white liberals supporting Dr. King's efforts.

In July of that year, The Atlanta Constitution carried an article saying that Jack H. O'Dell of New York, who had been reported by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and the House Committee on Un-American Activities to have been linked with Communist activity, was a member of Dr. King's staff.

Dr. King said Mr. O'Dell had left the organization on June 26. He acknowledged that Mr.

O'Dell "may have had some connections in the past" with Communism but he was convinced that Mr. O'Dell had renounced them.

The Justice Department was then allied with Dr. King's organization in a number of efforts to break down segregation, and it was known that there was concern within the department about the involvement of persons in the civil rights movement with Communist background.

Broad National Support

Dr. King's efforts then had broad national support. Liberals who backed the efforts financially believed that it would be at least a tactical mistake to permit the infiltration into the movement of any elements that could be branded anti-American.

The movement and its leaders were reportedly kept under constant surveillance by the F.B.I., both for their protection from white militants, and because of the bureau's concern with Communist subversion. In his travels through the south, Dr. King had as many as six agents trailing him.

In a celebrated news conference in November of 1964, Mr. Hoover called Dr. King "the most notorious liar in the country" for saying that F.B.I. agents in Albany, Ga., had failed to act on the civil rights complaints of Negroes.

In 1965, white conservatives began making public statements that the bureau had secret information on Dr. King that could be damaging. The bureau would say nothing publicly about these statements.

They were never denied nor confirmed.

In December of 1966, Mr. Hoover and Mr. Kennedy, then a Senator from New York, engaged in a widely publicized dispute over the bureau's eavesdropping activities. Senator Kennedy said that he had not been aware of all of the bureau's electronic surveillance. Mr. Hoover replied that was "absolutely inconceivable."

Wiretapping Disclosed

Last June 4, it was disclosed in a hearing in Houston on an appeal by Cassius Clay, the former heavyweight boxing champion, from his conviction for refusing to be drafted that the F.B.I. had tapped Dr. King's telephone calls.

Later, after Carl T. Rowan, the columnist, criticized Mr. Hoover in connection with the King wiretapping, the F.B.I. released a letter to Mr. Rowan from Clyde A. Tolson, associate director, saying that the wiretap was "specially approved in advance in writing by the late Attorney General of the United States, Mr. Robert F. Kennedy" and was done "strictly in the field of internal security."

Yesterday, Mr. Hoover said in a rare newspaper interview with The Washington Star, that he had memorandums by Courteney Evans, then assistant bureau director and liaison officer with the Justice Department, showing Mr. Kennedy to be the initiator.

In June of 1963, Mr. Hoover said the Evans memorandum showed, Mr. Kennedy said he was concerned about reports that Dr. King had Marxist leanings—Dr. King consistently

denied this charge—and wanted to know if it was feasible to use electronic devices to prove or disprove the allegations, specifically to check on Dr. King's reported dealings with a New York lawyer with Communist connections.

Difficulty Cited

Mr. Evans's reply, Mr. Hoover said, was that it would be difficult to tap Dr. King's lines because of his constant travels.

But in the following October the bureau advised Mr. Kennedy that it was feasible to tap the line of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta, and this was done, according to Mr. Hoover's reading of Mr. Evans's memorandums.

The wiretap was discontinued on April 30, 1965, several months after Mr. Katzenbach succeeded Mr. Kennedy as Attorney General, Mr. Hoover told The Star.

Mr. Clark, who was in the Justice Department all this time and succeeded Mr. Katzen-

bach in 1967, said Mr. Hoover was being deceptive in portraying the F.B.I. as the reluctant spy on Dr. King.

"Mr. Hoover repeatedly requested me to authorize F.B.I. wiretaps on Dr. King while I was Attorney General," he said. "The last of these requests, none of which was granted, came two days before the murder of Dr. King [on April 4, 1968]."